

*Speech to House of Representatives Puts National Spotlight on Puerto Rican Government's Campaign to Silence Student Protestors, Puerto Rico Bar Association*

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**(Washington, DC)** – Today, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) delivered a speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to call national attention to the developing civil rights crisis in Puerto Rico. In recent months, certain protests have been banned, demonstrations have been broken up violently by police using clubs and pepper spray, the Legislature has moved to conduct some business behind closed doors, and free speech advocates have been jailed. Severe cuts to the budget of the University of Puerto Rico and a huge increase in tuition and fees sparked the original protests, which were the catalyst for further escalation of demonstrations that have spread to labor unions, parents and alumni of the university, and more broadly.

"What far-away land has seen student protest banned, union protesters beaten and free speech advocates jailed?," Rep. Gutierrez asked during his speech to Congress, answering, "The United States of America's colony of Puerto Rico. Sound outrageous? It is. But true and well-documented. I ask my colleagues in U.S. House of Representatives to turn their eyes to Puerto Rico."

Standing before a picture of Judge José A. Fusté, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, the Congressman denounced the jailing of Osvaldo Toledo, President of the Puerto Rico Bar Association, jailed by Judge Fusté.

"What was Osvaldo Toledo's crime? Educating his members about how to opt out of a politically motivated lawsuit designed to destroy the organization. For me, this attack was the final straw and brought me to the floor to speak out," the Congressman, whose parents were born in Puerto Rico, said in his remarks.

Documents that instruct members of the Puerto Rico Bar Association how to opt out of the politically motivated class action law suit were entered into the Congressional Record by Rep. Gutierrez as a way of getting the information out despite the efforts of Judge Fusté to prevent their dissemination.

"Attacking free speech doesn't work in a democracy," the Congressman concluded. "Here is a fact that most of us learned long ago. Here is a lesson the people of Egypt taught the world last week: Brutal laws and secret meetings and armed enforcers don't extinguish the flame of justice – they are the spark that makes it burn brighter."

A video of the Congressman's remarks on the floor of the House of Representatives is available [here](#).

The full text of his remarks is available [here](#). Links to the documents the Congressman entered into the Congressional Record are also available at that location.

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